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Voting Patterns in Post-Mubarak Egypt

Jeffrey Martini and Stephen M. Worman

Key findings

- Similar to the United States, Egypt has its own "red state–blue state" dynamics.
- Islamists run strongest in the governorates of Upper Egypt, outlying western governorates, and North Sinai.
- Non-Islamist parties have polled well in Cairo and its immediate environs, South Sinai, as well as in the more sparsely populated governorates abutting the Red Sea.
- The Delta has been contested territory, with Islamists underperforming their national averages but still doing well in absolute terms.
- Islamists achieved their high-water mark in the initial ballots after the January 25 Revolution, but the gap between them and their non-Islamist rivals has since narrowed.
- Although non-Islamists announced a boycott of the upcoming election, their influence is not weakening. Further, non-Islamist parties could benefit from extended Islamist leadership, if that leadership proves a disappointment to voters.
- Should non-Islamists reconsider the boycott and contest the 2013 parliamentary elections, they are likely to improve their performance from the 2011–2012 elections.

SUMMARY ■ The purpose of this report is to help U.S. policymakers and Middle East watchers better understand voting patterns in Egypt since the 2011 revolution. While much has been written on the electoral strength of Islamists, most analysis has dealt with Egypt at the national level, ignoring regional divides within the country. In contrast, this report identifies the areas within Egypt where Islamist parties run strongest and the areas where non-Islamists are most competitive.

To address this issue, the authors analyze electoral data from Egypt's four major votes since the revolution, presented in governorate-level maps that depict subnational voting patterns. The trends that emerge are then analyzed in light of recent political developments, including the street protests against the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) that roiled Egypt in late 2012 and early 2013, as well as the emergence of the National Salvation Front (NSF) as an umbrella for non-Islamist opposition groups.

Applying this study approach, the authors find that while Islamists perform well across the whole of the country, they draw their strongest electoral support in Upper Egypt, North Sinai, and the sparsely populated governorates in the west. In contrast, non-Islamist parties fare best in Cairo and its immediate environs, Port Said, South Sinai, and the sparsely populated governorates abutting the Red Sea. The Delta is contested, with Islamists winning by smaller margins of victory than would be expected given their historical roots in this region.

Tracking electoral performance over time reveals a narrowing of the gap between Islamist parties and their non-Islamist rivals. Islamists thoroughly dominated the initial parliamentary elections held in late 2011 and early 2012, just as their position

prevailed overwhelmingly in the March 2011 referendum on the interim constitution. However, the MB candidate eked out a victory in the June 2012 presidential contest, and the December 2012 referendum on the permanent constitution passed more narrowly than the interim charter.

At the time of this writing, the timing of Egypt's upcoming parliamentary election and the participation of the NSF in it are uncertain. Should elections go ahead and the major non-Islamist parties maintain the boycott they announced in February 2013, another Islamist victory would be all but inevitable. Should the non-Islamist parties reverse course and contest the vote, this report argues that non-Islamists would improve their position, picking up seats from their Islamist rivals. The potential boycott notwithstanding, Egypt does not appear "lost" to Islamists, nor are non-Islamists irrelevant to the country's future. Rather, Egypt appears headed toward a much more competitive political environment in which Islamists are increasingly challenged to maintain their electoral edge.

INTRODUCTION

Since the January 25 Revolution toppled Hosni Mubarak in 2011, Egypt's political transition has been punctuated by a series of Islamist victories at the polls. In parliamentary and presidential elections held in 2011 and 2012,[1] Islamist parties and individual candidates won the votes outright. Islamists were also the most vocal supporters in the referendums on the interim and permanent constitutions, and their position prevailed among the electorate. This string of victories has given rise to a narrative that Islamists are overwhelmingly popular in Egypt and lack a true electoral competitor. To examine this hypothesis and provide a more granular understanding of Egypt's political geography, this report analyzes governorate-level voting data from four instances of post-Revolution balloting.[2] The analysis reveals a picture of an Egyptian electorate that is increasingly polarized and far from unified in its support for Islamists.

Similar to the United States, Egypt has its own "red state–blue state" dynamics. Islamists—including both the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and Salafist groups—run strongest in the governorates of Upper Egypt west of the Nile River. Non-Islamist parties have polled well in Cairo and its immediate environs, as well as in the more sparsely populated governorates abutting the Red Sea. The Delta has been contested territory, with Islamists underperforming their national averages but still doing well in absolute terms.

In addition to revealing clear geographic divides, a comparison of results across elections indicates that support for Islamists has eroded over time. They achieved their high-water mark in the initial ballots after the January 25 Revolution, but the gap between them and their non-Islamist rivals has since narrowed. If these trend lines hold, Egypt does not appear "lost" to Islamists, nor are non-Islamists irrelevant to the country's future.[3] Rather, Egypt appears headed toward a much more competitive political environment in which Islamists are increasingly challenged to maintain their electoral edge.

BREAKDOWN OF THE EGYPTIAN ELECTORATE BY REGION

Egypt can be divided into several regions. The most densely populated area is the capital city, Cairo, and its immediate environs. The sprawling metropolis falls within the governorates of Cairo and Giza, which together are home to 22 percent of Egypt's eligible voters (see Figure 1).[4] Immediately to the north of Cairo is the region known as the Delta, where the Nile River fans out before emptying into the Mediterranean. Comprising al-Buheira, al-Gharbiya, al-Qalayubia, al-Sharqiya, Alexandria, Daqhiliya, Dumyat, Kafr al-Shaykh, Ismailiya, Munufiya, and Port Said governorates, this region boasts 51 percent of the Egyptian electorate. South of Cairo is the region known as Upper Egypt, which includes al-Minya, Asyut, Aswan, Bani Sweif, Luxor, Qena, and Sohag governorates. These southern governorates contain 24 percent of the Egyptian electorate. To the west are the outlying, sparsely populated governorates of Marsa Matruh and New Valley, which are desert areas with less than 1 percent of the electorate. Immediately to the East of the Nile are the also sparsely populated governorates of Suez and the Red Sea, which make up about 1 percent of the electorate. And finally, the two Sinai governorates are a mix of new resort towns and a small Bedouin population that make up less than 1 percent of the electorate.

CONVENTIONAL VIEW OF WHERE ISLAMIST SUPPORT IS CONCENTRATED

Egypt watchers have long asserted that Islamists enjoy their strongest following in the regions of the Delta and Upper Egypt. Analysts have attributed the strength of Islamists in the Delta to several factors. First, the MB, the best organized Islamist group in Egypt, was born in the Delta.[5] Hasan al-Banna established the Brotherhood in al-Isma'iliya in 1928. Although it has since developed branches throughout the country—and affiliate groups throughout the broader Middle East region—to this day, many of the MB's key leaders hail from the

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Study Approach

The objective of this study is to identify where Islamists draw their strongest support within Egypt's 27 governorates.[a] Our purpose in mapping the electoral base of Islamist parties is to inform efforts of the United States and other international actors to engage these parties in the context of their leadership of post-Mubarak Egypt.[b] The support commanded by Islamists is only one of many dynamics that shape the results of Egyptian elections. Future exploration of where female candidates or pro-labor parties run strongest, for example, would help to more fully depict Egypt's political landscape.

To present a picture of the Islamist base within Egypt, we constructed maps that break down electoral performance by governorate. Discerning Islamist support was muddied by the fact that several parties in Egypt self-identify as "Islamist" but espouse very different political platforms. Conversely, few parties in Egypt expressly self-identify as "secular" (*'almānī*). Because these groups reject that term but vary in their orientation from Nasserists to liberals, we have opted to characterize them as non-Islamists. In order to discern the relative strength of Islamists in the 2011–2012 parliamentary elections, the authors summed the seats won by the FJP with the seats won by Salafists.[c] This is not meant to imply that the FJP and Salafists ran in an electoral coalition—they did not—nor that they necessarily share the same legislative agenda. Rather, the intent was to compare the portions of the electorate that voted "Islamist" with those that voted for non-Islamist parties, recognizing that the space between them is actually a continuum and not a simple dichotomy.[d]

For the purpose of analysis, we focus on four votes: the 2011–2012 election for the lower house of parliament (*majlis al-sha'b*), the June 2012 presidential runoff, and the two referendums on the interim and permanent constitutions. We chose not to examine in detail the elections for the upper house (*majlis al-shūra*) because Islamists faced little competition from non-Islamist parties due to the expectation, at the time of the vote, that the upper house would be eliminated in the permanent constitution.[e] This expectation—along with the fact that the lower house elections taxed the capacity of the non-Islamist parties to field candidates—essentially ceded the upper house elections to Islamist parties, which dominated the vote even more thoroughly than they did in the lower house.

We also chose not to examine the May 2012 first round vote in the presidential elections because it was not a good indicator of Islamist support given that the large number of candidates—five first-tier candidates and many more second-tier candidates[f]—obscured aggregate voter preferences. The runoff election, which pitted MB candidate and eventual victor Mohamed Mursi against the staunchly secular Ahmed Shafiq, is a much clearer indicator of Islamist support because Mursi was explicitly running on the Brotherhood's platform and Shafiq ran as a bulwark against the Islamization of Egyptian politics.[g]

[a] Shortly after Egypt's 2011 Revolution, there was a realignment of governorates in which two—Helwan and the Sixth of October—were subsumed by others. This took place after the March 2011 referendum on the interim constitution. The authors present data for that poll across 29 governorates, whereas for subsequent elections they present data for 27.

[b] Jeff Martini, Dalia Dassa Kaye, and Erin York, *The Muslim Brotherhood, Its Youth, and Implications for U.S. Engagement,* Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1257, 2012. As of March 7, 2013: http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1247.html

[c] *Salafist* describes a strain of Islamists who seek to re-create the original society of the Prophet Mohamed. They generally self-identify as such by using the descriptor *salafī* to describe their organization or project.

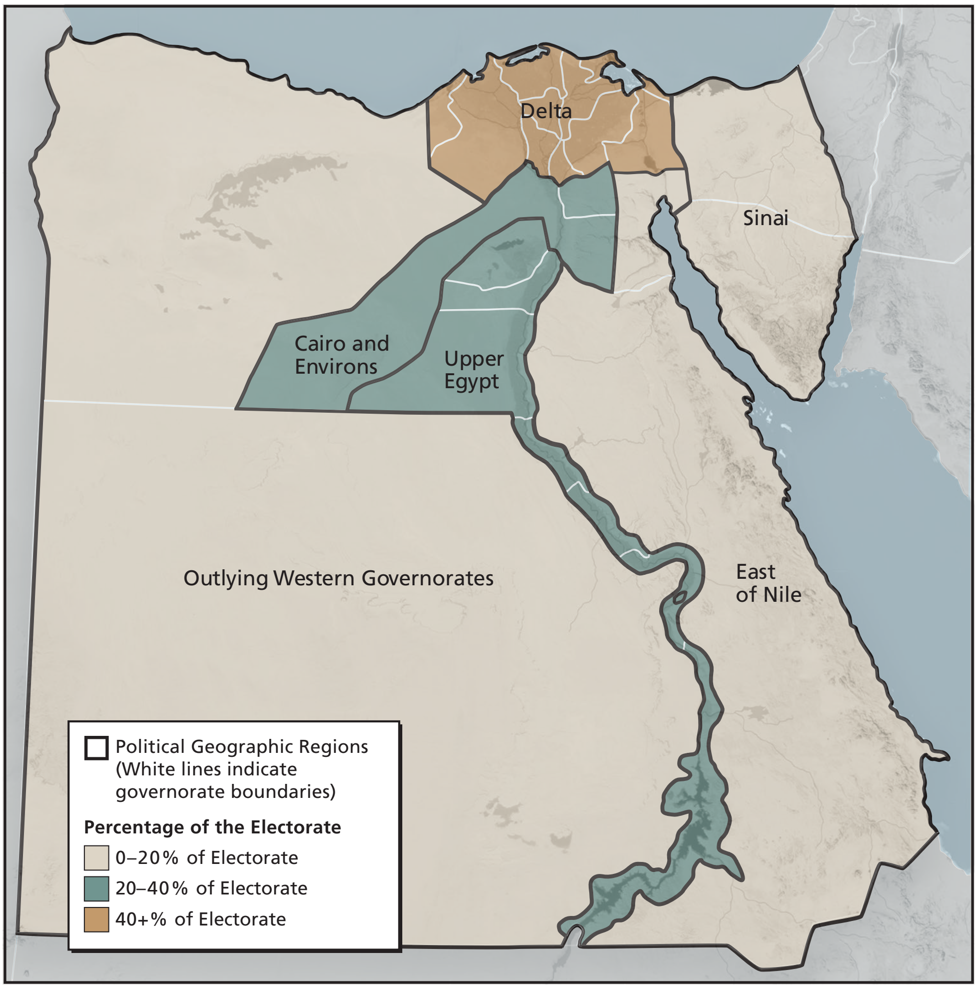
[d] This point is perhaps best illustrated by the MB breakaway parties such as al-Wasat and the Egyptian Current, which are Islamist in orientation but more apt to align with non-Islamist groups on social issues. Of these parties, only al-Wasat actually won seats in parliament and its take was a modest ten seats. We do not include this party in our count of Islamist seats.

[e] Karim Abu Yousef and 'Abida al-Dandrawi, "Al-Watan wa al-Dustūr lil Jamī'" (The Nation and the Constitution is for Everyone), *al-Masry al-Yawm,* November 3, 2011.

[f] The first-tier candidates were Mohamed Mursi, Ahmed Shafiq, Hamadin Sabahi, 'Abdelmoneim Abu al-Futuh, and 'Amr Mousa, all of whom received at least 11 percent of the popular vote. There were also a number of "also-rans," none of whom received more than 1 percent of the vote.

[g] It must be conceded that this vote was probably a better indicator of the portion of the Egyptian electorate that voted against Shafiq, as opposed to voting for Mursi. Given Shafiq's baggage as the last prime minister appointed under Mubarak, it is reasonable to assume that many votes for Mursi were actually votes against Shafiq.

Figure 1. Egypt's Regions and Their Share of the Electorate



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Delta. For example, Mohamed Badiʿ, the head of the Brotherhood, and President Mursi, the first party leader of the FJP, are from al-Gharbiya and al-Sharqiya governorates, respectively. The MB's deep roots in this area have led many to refer to the Delta as the organization's stronghold (*maʿqil*).[6] Just as the MB has found the Delta fertile ground for its recruitment, Salafist groups have also flourished in this region. The most prominent Salafist organization in Egypt, al-Daʿwa al-Salafiya, is based in Alexandria and the Salafist movement has built strong networks in smaller cities such as Damanhour and Mansoura.[7]

As for Upper Egypt, it is widely believed that the conservative social values of the region's population make it more receptive to Islamist outreach. Indeed, during the Islamic "awakening" (*sahwa*) that took place in the late 1960s and 1970s, Upper Egypt saw a proliferation of Islamic groups known collectively as *al-Gamāʿāt al-Islamīya*. Some of these groups took a violent turn, others joined forces with the MB, and still others adopted strict Salafist views but distanced themselves from direct political action. Notwithstanding the diversity in the types of Islamic movements present in the region, the combination of predominantly traditional values and the awakening's legacy have reinforced the view that Upper Egypt is predisposed to Islamism.[8]

ANALYSIS OF VOTING PATTERNS

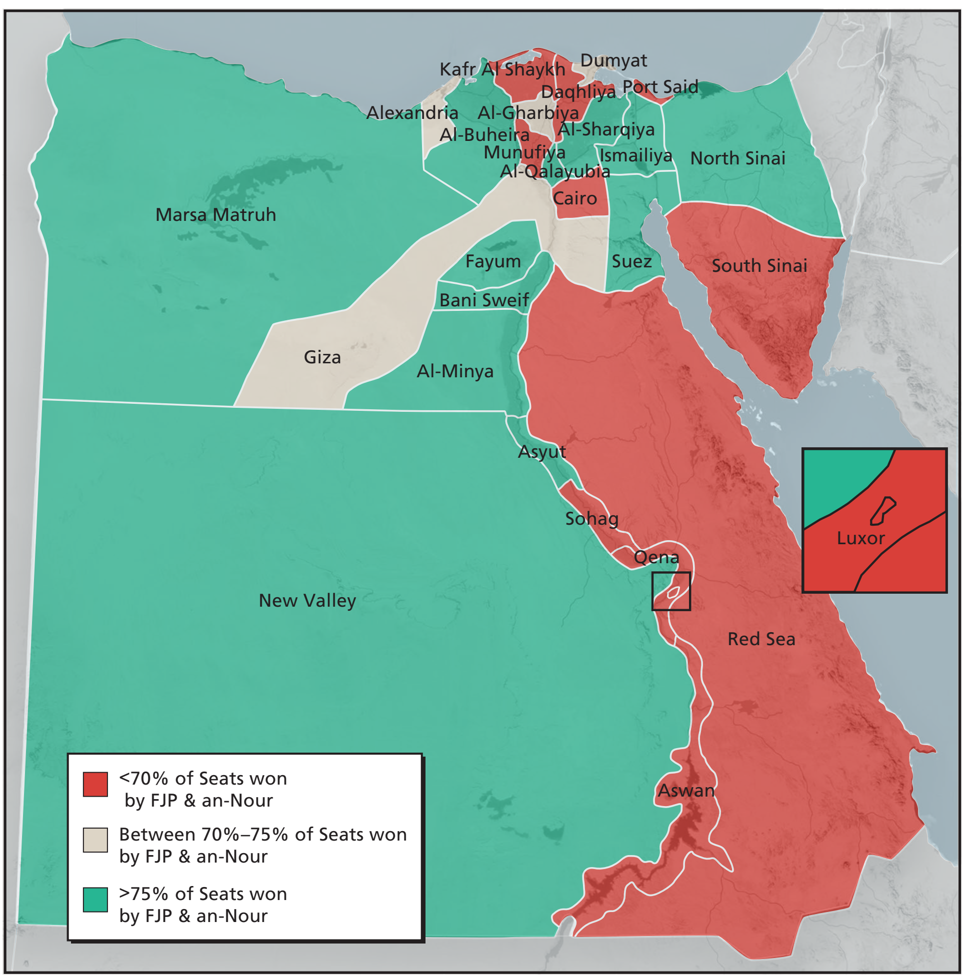
The most direct indicator of the strength of Islamist parties in post-Mubarak Egypt is the outcome of the 2011–2012 parliamentary elections.[9] Previously prohibited from contesting elections under their own party banners, this was the first time that either the Muslim Brotherhood or Salafist groups ran in Egyptian elections as officially sanctioned political parties.[10] Whether due to genuine support for their programs or the weakness of non-Islamist parties, Islamists won the vote handily: The MB's Freedom and Justice Party and the Salafist an-Nour party won 73 percent of the seats in the lower house. The FJP led a coali-

tion that claimed 235 seats, or 47 percent,[11] while the Salafists won 123 seats, or 25 percent.[12] To put in perspective just how thoroughly Islamists dominated the vote, the best non-Islamist finisher, the Wafd party, won just 38 seats, or 8 percent of the total.[13] Although the lower house of parliament was subsequently dissolved by a decision of the Supreme Constitutional Court in a dispute over the constitutionality of the election law, few doubt that the elections were free and fair.

But while Islamists notched a landslide victory in the initial parliamentary elections, their performance was not uniform across the country. Islamists captured at least half of available seats in every governorate; however, their share varied from highs of 100 percent in the sparsely populated governorate of Marsa Matruh and 89 percent in the governorate of Fayum to a more modest 50 percent of the seats in Port Said, the Red Sea, South Sinai, and Aswan. Figure 2 presents a governorate-level breakdown of the Islamists' electoral performance. Governorates shaded in gray are those in which Islamists won a share of seats similar to their overall performance of 73 percent. Green shading indicates governorates where Islamists won a larger share of seats than their overall performance; red shading indicates governorates in which Islamists won a smaller share.

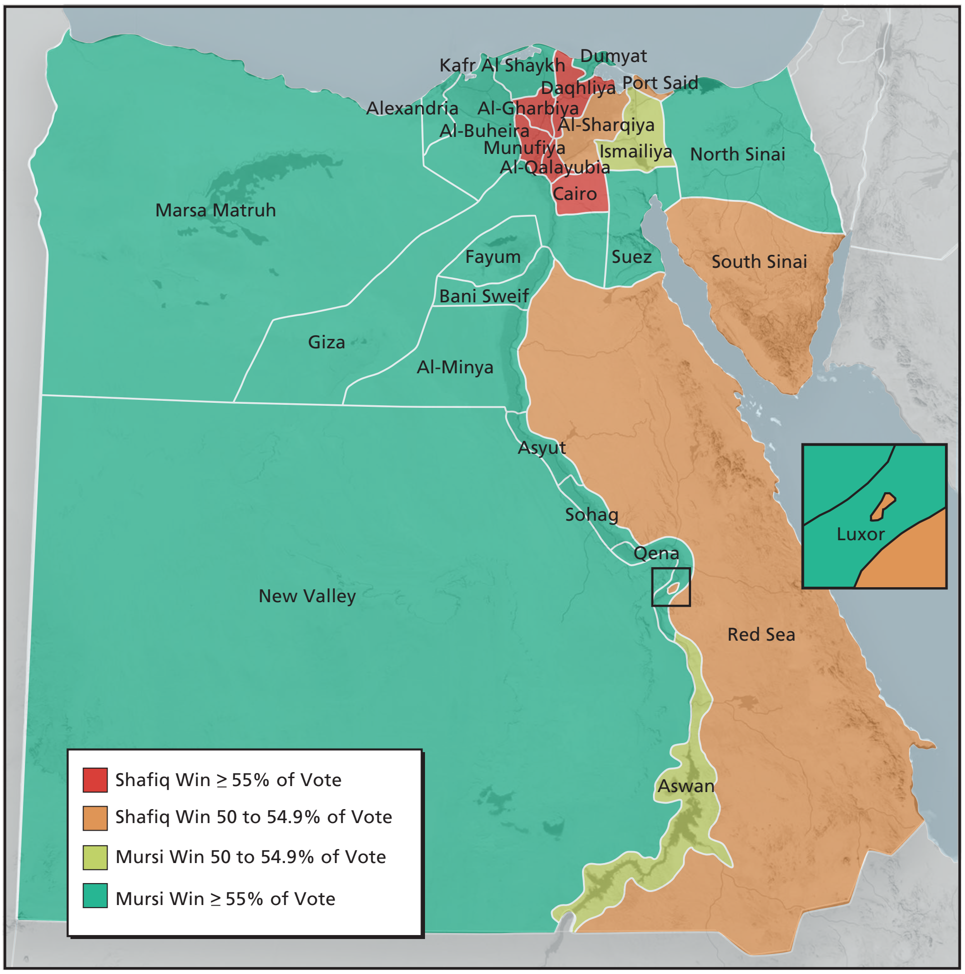
What stands out in the results is that Islamists, while underperforming in the more urban and cosmopolitan governorates where that would be expected (such as Cairo and Port Said), did not run as strongly as might have been anticipated in the Delta and the farthest south governorates of Upper Egypt. Some of these results can be explained by particular circumstances. For example, Luxor, in Upper Egypt, is a small governorate with only six seats in the lower house.[14] Had just one of Luxor's seats flipped from non-Islamist parties to an Islamist party, the Islamists' share in Luxor would have jumped from 66 percent to 83 percent. Luxor's population is also almost wholly economically dependent upon tourist revenues and boasts a considerable Coptic Christian population, so it should not be a surprise that this governorate is less receptive to Islamist parties.

Figure 2. Results of the 2011–2012 Parliamentary Elections for the Egyptian Lower House by Governorate



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Figure 3. Results of the June 2012 Presidential Runoff by Governorate



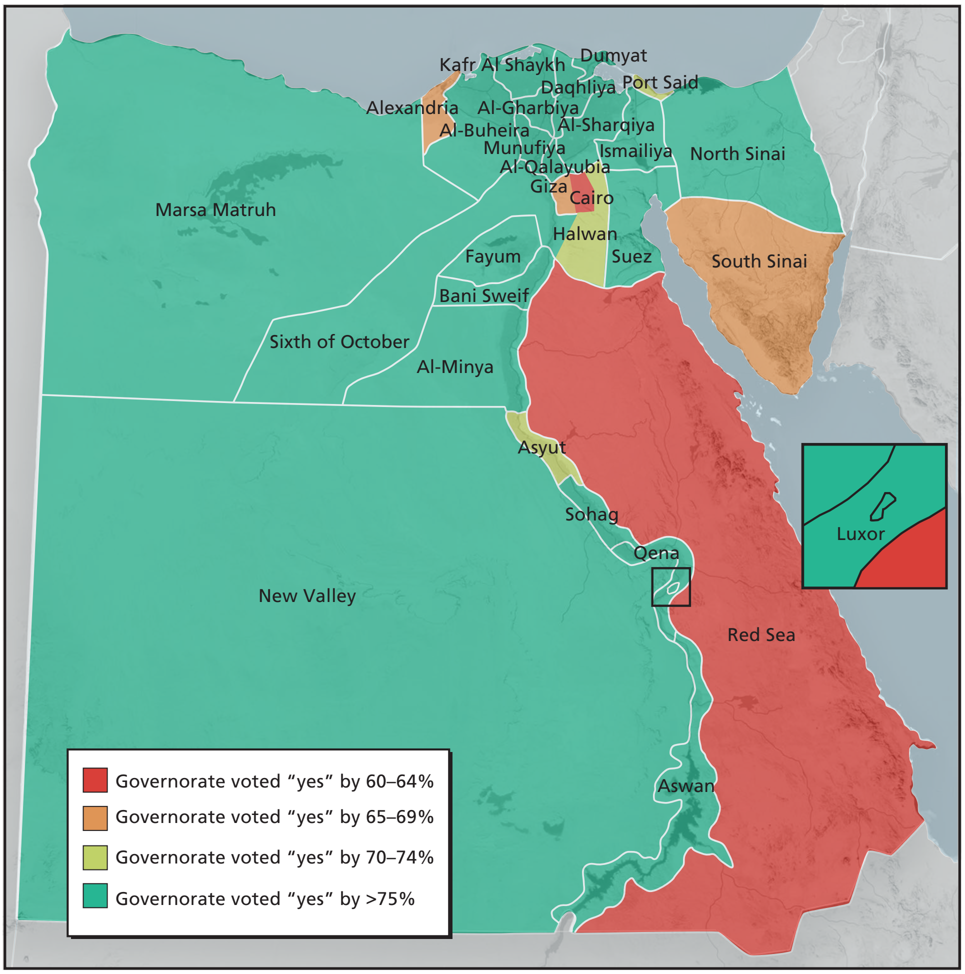
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However, Islamists notably underperformed in the medium-sized governorates of Sohag (in Upper Egypt) and Munufiya (in the Delta), with 30 and 24 seats respectively, where the weaker performance is harder to explain away as an anomaly. It is also notable that Islamists underperformed in some of the more populous areas of the country where the most parliamentary seats are at stake. For example, Cairo and Daqhliya (in the Delta) are Egypt's first and third most populous governorates, and where Islamists failed to win a share of parliamentary seats proportional to their national average.

The fact that the Delta has not been as strong an Islamist electoral base as might be expected was further underscored by the June 2012 presidential runoff. In that election, Mursi took the presidency over Shafiq in a tightly contested election, winning 51.7 percent of the vote to Shafiq's 48.3 percent. Figure 3 shows the results by governorate. Most of the election went according to script. Non-Islamist candidates such as Shafiq are thought to have a better chance in Cairo and Port Said. Furthermore, Shafiq's background as a former Air Force commander was expected to play well in the Red Sea and South Sinai, where the military is a large landowner and the economic lifeblood comes from resorts, whose workers fear Islamists would restrict tourism. As was also expected, Mursi ran strongest in Upper Egypt, winning all of the governorates except Luxor. Despite the competitive nature of the race at a national level, Mursi won many of these governorates by a large margin. For example, he notched 78 percent of the vote in Fayum and 66 percent in Bani Sweif.

But once again, the Delta emerged as an unexpected problem spot for the Islamists. Shafiq won al-Gharbiya, al-Sharqiya, Daqhliya, Munufiya, and al-Qalayubia governorates, all of which sit in the heart of the Delta. This is despite the fact that al-Sharqiya is Mursi's home governorate and one he previously represented as a parliamentarian.[15] Although the vote was close in al-Sharqiya, Shafiq won the remaining four governorates by at least ten percentage points. These results are also broadly

Figure 4. Results from the March 2011 Referendum on the Interim Constitution



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consistent with the Islamists' performance in the parliamentary elections, held six months earlier. In both polls, pockets of the Delta emerged as contested areas where non-Islamist candidates made significant inroads.

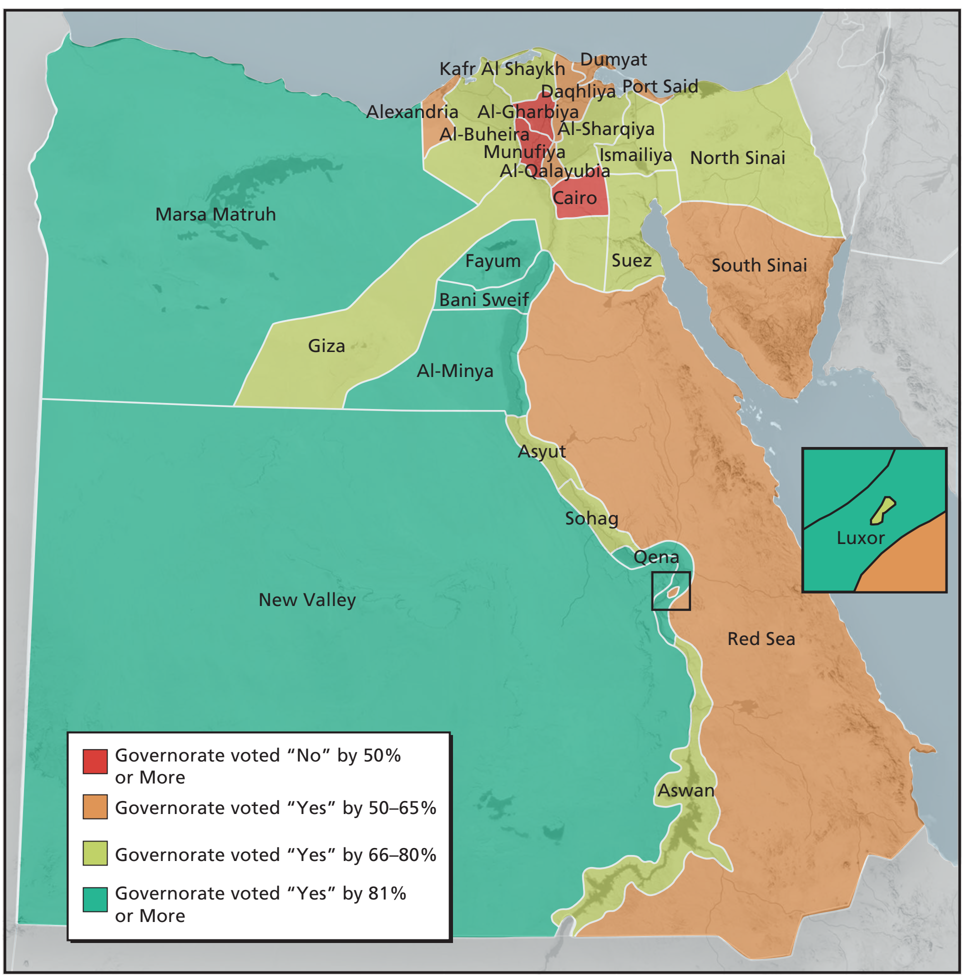
Results from the two constitutional referendums are also useful indicators for discerning where the Islamists' support base is located within Egypt. However, caution must be exercised in interpreting the significance of voting in these instances. Unlike the 2011–2012 parliamentary elections and the June 2012 presidential election (in which voters were expressly asked to log a preference for candidates that either did or did not self-identify as Islamist), the two constitutional referendums were up-or-down votes on the legal framework of the transition and on the country's permanent constitution. However, Islamist parties urged their followers to vote "yes" in both cases, while most non-Islamist parties lined up against the charters.

Consistent with the parliamentary elections, the Islamists' position prevailed in the March 2011 referendum on the interim constitution. Every governorate supported the charter by at least 61 percent of the vote, and more than half of the governorates supported the charter by 80 percent or more (see Figure 4). There are many possible explanations for the results, and not all have to do with the FJP and an-Nour party backing the charter. Undoubtedly, some "yes" votes reflected a post-revolution moment of national unity. Others likely voted "yes" out of a desire to move forward with the transition, regardless of possible reservations about the framework. Nevertheless, it is significant that the Islamists rallied their supporters to vote "yes" by framing the vote as being for Article 2 of the constitution that establishes *shari'a* as the principal source of legislation. Specifically, Islamists' disingenuously asserted that a "no" vote was a vote against Article 2, an aspect of the constitution that is passionately supported by most Egyptians.

In the December 2012 referendum on Egypt's permanent constitution that was backed—and largely drafted—by Islamists, the "yes" vote once again won the day. This time, however, turnout fell, as did the margin of support. Whereas 41 percent of the electorate participated in the March 2011 referendum and 77 percent voted "yes," 33 percent of the electorate participated in the December 2012 referendum, and 64 percent voted "yes." The breakdown of the vote within Egypt was consistent with the trend lines established in previous polls. The Islamist position dominated in Upper Egypt, where the referendum passed by broad margins in all the governorates of the region, five of them approving the charter with at least 81 percent of the vote (see Figure 5). Opposition to the referendum ran strongest in Cairo and the Delta: Majorities in the governorates of Cairo, al-Gharbiya, and Munufiya all voted against the constitution, and in Port Said the constitution was narrowly approved with 51 percent support. Once again, this suggests that the Delta is less fertile ground for Islamists than previously believed.

In addition to weaker-than-expected Islamist support in the Delta, another important trend line across the four polls is that Islamist support faded after the initial high-water mark established in the early period of the transition. Thus, whereas the FJP and Salafists combined to win 73 percent of the lower house seats in late 2011 and early 2012, the FJP presidential candidate barely eked out a victory in the presidential vote six months later.[16] Similarly, whereas the Islamist-backed interim constitutional referendum of March 2011 passed convincingly, the permanent charter won with a more modest share of the vote. In each of the four polls considered, Islamists or the Islamist position has prevailed, but the margin of victory has fallen over time.

Figure 5. Results of December 2012 Referendum on the Egyptian Constitution by Governorate



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IMPLICATIONS FOR THE 2013 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND BEYOND

As Egyptians prepare for another round of parliamentary elections, the electoral prospects of the various parties is clouded by the uncertainty surrounding the vote. At the time of this writing, the election law is under judicial review and the participation of non-Islamists in the vote is in doubt. If elections are held and non-Islamists maintain their promised boycott, Islamists will sweep the vote by default. However, this potential outcome should not obscure the trend lines to date that show non-Islamist parties to be increasingly competitive in Egyptian politics. Even though their aggregate showing was weak in the last parliamentary elections, Egypt's non-Islamist parties were competitive in Cairo and its environs, where more than a fifth of the electorate resides. And the Delta region—where more than half of the electorate resides—is up for grabs for political parties of all ideological persuasions, as the preceding analysis has shown. Thus, while it is true that Islamists have dominated each vote since the 2011 uprising, non-Islamist parties have an opportunity to close that gap in future elections.

The outcome of future elections will not only be a function of Egypt's political geography. As incumbents, Islamists possess electoral advantages and disadvantages that will affect their prospects. On the one hand, the FJP and its allies can use their positions in government to tilt the playing field in their favor. For example, Islamists dominate the upper chamber of parliament that designed the electoral formula for the 2013 vote. Non-Islamists charge that Islamists maintained large electoral districts to exploit their organizational and fundraising advantages.[17] Similarly, the FJP's leadership of public service ministries allows it to control the flow of patronage in the run-up to the vote.[18] Mursi's appointment of five governors from the ranks of the MB provides additional opportunities to use the flow of local development projects to reinforce the FJP's electoral advantage.[19] And as the effective ruling party in Egypt, the FJP commands a disproportionate share of media coverage.

On the other hand, the FJP's position also introduces vulnerabilities. The transition has not delivered the types of benefits that voters are seeking. The economy remains troubled, insecurity is rife, and little progress has been made on holding Mubarak-era officials accountable for their abuses of power. Islamists, and the FJP in particular, are now seen by voters as owning these problems and will need to persuade voters that they will manage these challenges better than their political competitors if given more time in power. The FJP's talking points have been to ask for more time and to blame poor performance on the legacy of authoritarian rule.[20] Should non-Islamists boycott the upcoming vote, Egyptians will have no choice but to double down on the FJP, move even farther "right" by opting for the Salafist parties, or stay home. But when non-Islamists appear on future ballots, Egyptian voters may very well opt for change.

The FJP and its Islamist allies will also be challenged by recent political developments reinforcing the narrative that the Islamists' commitment to democratic practice is suspect. Whether the FJP and Salafists have embraced democratic values remains an open question, but Mursi's decree on November 22, 2012, placing his decisions above judicial review provided non-Islamists an opening for asserting that the Brotherhood is bent on dominating the state. The negative reaction against the decree was so strong, including from those within his own government,[21] that he eventually had to walk back several provisions. But this did little to alleviate the opposition's concerns, particularly when the Islamist-dominated assembly pushed through a constitution a month later that was opposed by most non-Islamist parties and political figures.

These developments have galvanized the non-Islamist opposition, which has staged numerous rallies since the November decree—including several outside the presidential palace that have turned violent. Although many of the marches have been large, the non-Islamist opposition's ability to command the street remains in doubt. At times, the newly formed NSF, which operates as an umbrella for the non-Islamist opposition, seems to graft itself onto other protest movements. For example, the NSF has tried to align itself with the current uprising in Suez Canal cities, which have been a focal point of unrest since a number of residents were sentenced to death over their role in the Port Said Soccer riots that killed 74 spectators in February 2012. Regardless of doubts over loyalty to the NSF from those in the street, the NSF is clearly benefitting from the Islamists' missteps.

Islamists also appear weakened by emerging splits within their ranks. In the first parliamentary elections, Islamists contested the vote in two major blocs, one led by the FJP and another by a coalition of Salafists. This means that the FJP and Salafists did compete against one another, although in districts where they faced non-Islamist candidates in runoff elections the FJP and Salafists made common cause, coordinating support

> Whatever the outcome of the upcoming elections, Islamists are likely to face electoral challenges going forward.

to the Islamist candidate irrespective of specific party affiliation. Moreover, Islamists closed ranks to work for a common purpose in pivotal moments in the transition, such as the presidential runoff election and constitutional drafting process. As for the non-Islamist parties, they failed to come together at key moments, waging elections on the basis of traditional affiliations (for example, labor and Arab nationalism) that scattered their support across party lines.[22]

Recent developments seem to suggest a shift in cohesiveness that favors non-Islamist groups. Within the Islamist camp, the Salafists are increasingly at odds with one another. Indeed, the "doves" of the Salafist movement have recently broken away from an-Nour to start the Free Homeland party. Similar to the NSF, an-Nour has become increasingly frustrated by what it views as the FJP's unilateral decisionmaking. As for the non-Islamist camp, the NSF has succeeded in bringing together traditional leftist parties such as al-Tagamu' and Karama with the historic nationalist party, al-Wafd, youth groups, and the political vehicles of former presidential candidates 'Amr Mousa and Mohamed Elbaradei. Initially, the aim of the alliance was to contest the 2013 elections on a single party list and thereby avoid the vote-splitting that plagued them in the first parliamentary election. But the NSF is now conditioning its participation in the elections on a number of demands that the FJP has refused to accede to, the farthest-reaching of which is the dismissal of the current cabinet in favor of a national unity government. So on February 26, the NSF announced that it would boycott the election. Subsequently, the election date was postponed in order to provide the judiciary more time to review the electoral law governing the vote. There is a chance the NSF will reconsider its boycott in the interim.

Whatever the outcome of the upcoming elections, Islamists are likely to face electoral challenges going forward. By trading in their oppositionist credentials for a leading role in the current government, Islamists will be judged on their ability to improve Egyptians' well-being. This is a much more difficult task than leveling critiques from outside the halls of power. And because Islamist leaders are using security forces against what remains an unruly street, they are vulnerable to the charge that they are adopting the strong-arm tactics of their predecessors. Over time, this is likely to lead to Islamists losing support from Egyptians wary of the emergence of another authoritarian single-party state.

When non-Islamists eventually do appear on the ballot, they will be further aided by the Supreme Constitutional Court's decision that representation in the lower house of parliament must be proportional to the size of the electoral district's population. Historically, electoral districts were drawn in a way that gave Upper Egypt a disproportionate share of representation. The previous regime preferred this arrangement, given the region's weak political consciousness and the regime's ability to use local *za'ims* to deliver districts to the ruling party.[23] Ironically, this strategy was maintained by Islamists in the post-Mubarak era, who saw Upper Egypt as part of their base. However, the court's decision has led to an increase in the number of representatives in the more populous regions of the north. In particular, Cairo and its environs are now to be allocated an additional 24 representatives, while three governorates in the Delta will now have 18 additional representatives.[24] These are parts of the country where Islamists are increasingly challenged by their non-Islamist competitors.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

As demonstrated in this report, political preferences in Egypt vary substantially from region to region. A more granular understanding of the Egyptian electorate can help U.S. policymakers anticipate the domestic political considerations that drive Egypt's policy positions. For example, recognizing that the main political competition in Upper Egypt is between different Islamist factions makes it easier to understand the jostling that pushes candidates to "out-Islamist" one another in this region. Egypt's political geography also goes a long way toward explaining the allocation of funds for local development projects. Thus, understanding the Egyptian electorate offers

a window into specific parties' governing priorities and the domestic political constraints under which they operate.

The NSF's decision to remove itself from the political process as a means of pressuring the FJP to govern in a more inclusive manner has been followed by predictable cries for more U.S. support to non-Islamist opposition groups.[25] Thus far, the United States has wisely avoided targeting assistance programming in ways that give one political party an advantage over another. U.S. policy is to avoid interfering in Egypt's domestic politics; any attempt to do so would likely be counterproductive because recipients would lose credibility and open themselves to being branded as a "fifth column." Actors on the ground have even branded U.S. statements urging the NSF to participate in elections as unwanted foreign intervention.[26]

In any event, it is not clear that one party or bloc better aligns with U.S. interests than another. Looking at the entire spectrum of U.S. interests vis-à-vis Egypt, there are areas of cooperation the United States can pursue with any of Egypt's political forces. Where differences exist, non-Islamists do not necessarily align with U.S. interests better than Islamists. The reality is that the positions of parties on both ends of the ideological spectrum raise concerns for the United States. Indeed, when it comes to free-market principles or upholding the peace treaty with Israel, the political force in Egypt offering the greatest cause for concern may be the Leftist al-Karama party. On the other hand, many of the Islamist groups—the Salafists in particular—hold positions out of step with the U.S. commitment to gender equality and minority rights. Simply put, there is no ideal partner among the Egyptian contenders for power.

Perhaps the best the United States can hope for in the coming years is greater parity in the representation of political forces so as to avoid the emergence of another single-party state. If this is taken as the measure of success, then the trend lines reviewed in this report offer some reason for optimism. The Egyptian electorate is not monolithic in its voting preferences, and certain regions of the country appear receptive to the message of non-Islamist parties. Although an opposition boycott would mean that the non-Islamists' potential breakthrough will have to wait, Islamists are likely to have to share power with their ideological rivals eventually.

CONCLUSION

This report has attempted to further the understanding of two important issues. The first is to provide a more granular view of the Egyptian electorate that identifies voting patterns at a subnational level. Analysis of the four major votes in the post-Mubarak period reveal that Islamists run strongest in Upper Egypt, the outlying governorates in the western part of the country, and North Sinai; whereas non-Islamists are most competitive in Cairo and its environs, the sparsely populated governorates along the Red Sea, and South Sinai. The Delta, where more than half of Egypt's eligible voters reside, is highly contested territory, with Islamists underperforming their national averages but still doing quite well in absolute terms. These patterns are likely to hold in future elections as well. That said, voting preferences can change over time and these regional divides should not be viewed as fixed.

The report also sheds light on voting trends over the past two-plus years of Egypt's transition. The trends reveal that while Islamists are clearly the dominant political actors in post-Mubarak Egypt, their support has waned over time. Should the non-Islamists maintain their present position of boycotting the upcoming elections, the Islamists will be granted a reprieve from a possible reckoning with the voters, but Islamists will likely lose ground in future elections. This finding is given further credence by the current political context in Egypt, in which President Mursi's power grabs have galvanized opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition, the splintering of the Salafi movement and the relative cohesiveness of the non-Islamist opposition would appear to bode well for the latter's electoral prospects.

This report leaves a number of important questions unanswered. It can help readers discern where Islamists run strongest within Egypt, but it cannot tell readers the specific characteristics of voters who support Islamist parties. Without access to more sophisticated polling, it is not possible to discern whether voters from a certain socioeconomic class are more inclined to vote for Islamist parties. And while we can say that the more traditional areas of Upper Egypt are fertile territory for Islamists, we do not have the necessary demographic data to definitively say that rural voters are more inclined to support Islamists than urban voters. We would strongly encourage further research—and data collection—on these topics.

NOTES

[1] The parliament elected in November 2011–January 2012 was dissolved in June 2012 by decision of the Supreme Constitutional Court.

[2] Governorates in Egypt are roughly equivalent to states in the United States. Most governorates comprise several electoral districts. For example, in the one-third of seats that were contested as single-member districts in the initial parliamentary elections for the lower house, the Cairo governorate was composed of nine electoral districts, while a few smaller governorates, such as Suez, operated as a single electoral district.

[3] Bret Stephens, "Who Lost Egypt?" *Wall Street Journal,* June 25, 2012.

[4] All data presented in this section and in Figure 1 are taken from the official tally of eligible voters at the time of the 2012 constitutional referendum. The data is available from the High Electoral Commission of Egypt. As of March 7, 2013:
http://www.elections.eg/

[5] For accounts of the MB's inception, see: David Commins, "Hasan al-Banna: 1906-1949" in Ali Rahnema, ed., *Pioneers of Islamic Revival,* Zed Books, 1994; Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers,* Oxford, 1969; Lia Brynjar, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, The Rise of the Islamic Mass Movement 1928–1942,* Ithaca Press, 1998.

[6] "Al-Gamā'a fī Ismā'īlīya: Intahat al-Da'wa wa Baqa al-Ikhwān" (The Call Has Ended But the Brotherhood Remains), *al-Masry al-Yawm,* December 23, 2012; Shadi Hamid, "Brother President: The Islamist Agenda for Governing Egypt," *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs,* summer 2012, p. 123.

[7] Jonathan Brown, "Salafists and Sufis in Egypt," *Carnegie Paper,* December 2011, p. 4.

[8] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion Activism and Political Change in Egypt,* Columbia University, 2002, p. 115; *Muntasir al-Zayyat, Al-Gama'at al-Islamiyah: Ru'iah min al-Dakhil (The Islamic Groups: An Inside Perspective)*, El-Mahrosa Publishing and Distribution, 2005.

[9] All of the data presented in this report are taken from the official election results reported by Egypt's High Electoral Commission. The authors also consulted the final results published in *al-Ahram* newspaper, January 21, 2012, for the results of the 2011–2012 parliamentary elections.

[10] The MB had previously run in coalitions with official political parties such as the *Wafd*, or as independents.

[11] The number of seats won by the FJP is a common source of confusion. This is because the FJP ran as part of a larger electoral coalition. The party (narrowly construed and not the electoral coalition) won 116 seats by proportional representation and another 100 seats in single member districts, or 43.37 percent of total seats. But the broader FJP-led coalition won an additional 11 seats by proportional representation and 8 seats in single-member districts. This brings the coalition's grand total to 235 out of 498 seats, or 47.19 percent. The FJP's coalition included non-Islamist parties *al-Karama, al-Hadara*, and *Ghad al-Thawra*. However, it also included other Islamists from outside of the FJP, and all candidates in the coalition ran with the FJP behind it. Rather than making individual judgments about which candidates in the coalition should and should not be counted as Islamists, or which candidates did or did not win their seat due to FJP support, the authors have opted to use the coalition total of 47 percent of total seats.

[12] To ascertain the number of seats won by Salafists, we counted all the seats won by individuals running under the Nour party list. This not only included candidates of an-Nour party itself, but candidates representing the other Salafi parties that ran on the electoral list headed by an-Nour. The other parties on the list that won seats were the Construction and Justice Party and Asala (Authenticity) party.

[13] The only other non-Islamist group to win more than 5 percent of the seats in the lower house was the "Egyptian Bloc" coalition, which won 34 seats, or 7 percent of the total.

[14] In terms of the absolute number of eligible voters, Luxor is ranked 19th of Egypt's 27 governorates. It has roughly one-tenth of the number of eligible voters as reside in the largest governorate, Cairo.

[15] Mursi represented the district of Zaqaziq in the lower house from 2000–2005. At this time the MB was prohibited from running candidates for parliament under its own party banner. Mursi ran as an independent—and after winning, headed the Brotherhood's parliamentary bloc.

[16] It must be noted, however, that Mursi was not the strongest candidate the MB could have put forward. Indeed, Mursi, who lacks the charisma and name recognition of others within the MB, was selected as what Egyptians took to calling the "spare tire" only when Khairat al-Shater was disqualified from the race. For more on al-Shater's disqualification and the emergence of Mursi as the Brotherhood's second choice, see Marina Ottaway, "Egypt's Next President," *Carnegie Endowment,* May 9, 2012.

[17] "Hizb al-Mu'tamar Yantaqid Mashrū' Qānūn al-Intikhābāt al-Barlamānīya al-Jadīd," (The Congress Party Criticizes the New Parliamentary Election Law), *al Ahram,* January 2, 2013.

[18] "Misr: al-Ikhwān Tusaytir 'ala al-Wizārāt al-Khidamīya Qabl al-Intikhābāt" (Egypt: The Brotherhood Controls the Service Ministries Ahead of the Elections), *al Hayat,* January 3, 2013.

[19] "Muhāfazhāt Taht Hukm al-Ikhwān," (Governorates Under the Brotherhood's Rule), *al Masry al-Yawm,* February 12, 2013.

[20] "Kawārith Mutalāhiqa Yubariruha al-Ikhwān bi Irth al-Fasād" (The Brotherhood Blames Successive Disasters on 'The Legacy of Corruption'), *al Hayat,* January 17, 2013.

[21] "Wazīr al-'Adl: Laday Tahaffuzhāt 'ala al-I'lān al-Dustūrī . . . wa Saqtarih Ta'dīl Ba'd Nusūsihi" (The Minister of Justice: I Have Some Reservations About the Constitutional Decree and I'll Suggest Amending Some of Its Text), *al-Masry al-Yawm,* November 25, 2012.

[22] Michele Dunne and Tarek Radwan, "Egypt: Why Liberalism Still Matters," *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 24, No. 1, January 2013.

[23] *Za'ims* are local notables. In more traditional communities, they operate as de facto leaders to whom residents defer.

[24] The new breakdown of representatives by electoral district is contained in Law #2 published February 21, 2013, in Egypt's *Official Gazette*.

[25] Tarek Radwan, "The U.S. Hasn't Helped Egypt's Liberals Nearly Enough," *The Atlantic,* March 1, 2013.

[26] "Harakat al-Sha'b: Narfud Tadakhul Kerry fī Shu'ūnina wa Amirīka Tada'm al-Ikhwān mithl Isrā'īl," (The Popular Movement: We Reject Kerry's Intervention in Our Affairs and America Supports the Brotherhood Like It Supports Israel), *al-Yawm al-Sabi',* March 2, 2013.

About The Authors

Jeffrey Martini is a Middle East analyst at the RAND Corporation, where he works on political reform in the Arab world. He has published works on civil-military relations in Egypt, generational divides within the Muslim Brotherhood, changes in the regional security environment, and prospects for democratization in the "Arab Spring" countries. He has spent four years living in the Arab world, including three as a Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco and one in Cairo, Egypt, where he was a 2007–08 fellow in the CASA Arabic language program. He speaks, reads, and writes modern standard Arabic and speaks colloquial Moroccan and Egyptian. Martini received his bachelor's in political science and economics from Middlebury College and his master's in Arab studies from Georgetown University.

Stephen M. Worman is a research assistant at RAND. He earned his master's in international relations with a concentration in strategic studies from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He also served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Romania.

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